

## **Statement of the Executive Committee of the Czecho-Slovakian Union Conference Regarding the GC SDA Decision on Women's Ordination**

The executive committee of the SDA Czecho-Slovakian Union Conference issues the following statement in response to the decision of the General Conference, which rules it not acceptable for executive committees of the Divisions of the church to accept provisions towards women's ordination to full pastoral ministry, if they deem it appropriate.

In accordance with Scripture, stating in Galatians 3:28 that "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" and the 14<sup>th</sup> Fundamental Belief of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church on the "Unity in the Body of Christ", Adventists in Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and Slovakia profess that "the church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us."

Following the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the early Christian church, the efforts to rehabilitate the position of women in church characterised Czech and later also Moravian and Slovak Christian reformation movements in the Middle Ages. Pious women such as the Czech Queen Sophia of Bavaria or Anna of Mochau greatly helped God's work in sharing the gospel in the life of a well-known Czech reformer Jan Hus. As continuers of the reformation in Central Europe, we proudly profess our responsibility to this spiritual legacy of the revival of the church and society. The pursuit of dignified and just position of women belongs to the eminent values from which our formerly joint Republics were born in the last century. A woman is in our Central European culture socially more important than a man.

For these reasons, the delegates of the Czecho-Slovak Union Conference clearly expressed in May 2014 that they "agree that women can be ordained to full pastoral ministry in our union conference". They voiced their full "support to the position of the executive committee of the Inter-European Division to women's ordination, which was approved at the meeting of the committee in November 2013." Our stance was further reinforced in June 2014 by the Final Report of the Church's world-wide Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC), which studied the issue for two years and concluded that there exists no biblical or theological obstacle to women's ordination.

Virtuous women filled with the Spirit represent a powerful testimony of Christ and are used by the Holy Spirit as His collaborators in preaching the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit lends gifts to all believers irrespective of gender and women have played an important role since the beginning in the life of the church. Their determination, gifts and talents are a blessing for the whole of the body of Christ.

We are saddened by the decision of the General Conference regarding women's ordination to full pastoral ministry, which contradicts everything described above. We therefore interpret the decision as related to the authority of the church and not to Scripture and our beliefs, which guarantee equality of men and women in the church. We respect cultural specificities of our fellow believers in other parts of the world, but also expect them to respect ours. At the same time, we invite the women from SDA congregations in the Czech and Slovak Republics to join the church service including pastoral ministry, if they feel that God calls them to it. We consider the participation of women in the service the gospel in our territory very needed and desirable and are willing to do anything that achieves this.

Executive Committee of the Czecho-Slovakian Union Conference, November the 11<sup>th</sup> 2015